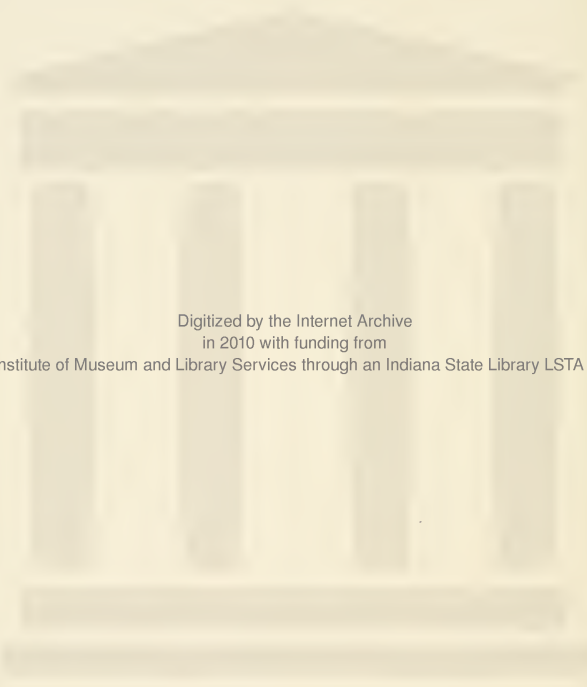


THE FAITH OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN



WILLIAM H. LAMBERT



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The Faith of Abraham Lincoln

An Address before
The Presbyterian Social Union of Philadelphia
February 22, 1909

By
WILLIAM H. LAMBERT

Brevet Major U. S. V.

Author of "Lincoln Literature," "The Gettysburg
Address: When Written, How Received,
Its True Form," etc., etc.



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“I cannot but know what you all know, that without a name,—perhaps without a reason why I should have a name,—there has fallen upon me a task such as did not rest even upon the Father of his Country,” were the words modestly spoken on the 13th day of February, 1861, by him who within four years of that utterance was to achieve such result and to attain such renown that on the roll of great Americans the one name which we think it not robbery to be equal with that of Washington is the name of Abraham Lincoln.

Coincident in the month of their birth, associated by the greatness of their work, enshrined pre-eminent above their fellows, it surely is not unfitting on this day that commemorates the birth of the first of these men to speak of the second,—the echoes of whose centenary observance are still audible—for it was his glory, as it had been his oft-declared purpose, to preserve and perpetuate the Government that the first had founded.

Invited to speak of the Faith of Abraham

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Lincoln, and seeking a text, I turned instinctively to that general letter with which it is probably easier to align his creed than it would be with those other epistles wherein admittedly are some things hard to be understood, although indeed the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians might aptly serve; accordingly I quote from James 2: 18, "I by my works will show thee my faith."

The religious beliefs of Lincoln positively asserted by many orators and writers have been strenuously, and in some instances vindictively, denied by others, and most notably by two of his early associates and friends, who, as his biographers, have contributed more than any others to our knowledge of his early life, but who while professing highest admiration for his character have done much to becloud his name. Their theory of the historian's obligation led them to write with needless insistence upon trivial details and with almost brutal candor concerning themes that might well have been passed over, or at least treated with decent reserve.

Each seems to have delighted to shock the sensibilities of the great President's admirers by magnifying incidents least creditable to him,

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and especially in emphatically asserting his scepticism and alleged lack of faith in Christianity. With curious inconsistency these writers make much of Lincoln's honesty and truthfulness and educe many instances proving his possession of these qualities in highest degree, while at the same time asserting that his frequent allusions in speech and letter to God and Providence are purely formal and meaningless, and at best used either in compliment to the persons to whom addressed or in deference to popular sentiment; nay, they even go so far as to intimate intentional deceit.

Himself a freethinker, Herndon claimed that Lincoln shared his beliefs, or lack of them, and was unable or unwilling to admit that the latter had changed his views; and Herndon apparently could not comprehend how Lincoln had risen responsive to his new duties and how immeasurably he had gone beyond his partner, who seemed jealously to resent the widening circles of Lincoln's friends and fame. The intimate relations between the two partners continued for nearly twenty years, but practically ceased with the departure of the President-elect for Washington in February, 1861.

Herndon's book for the period prior to the

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Presidency contains much of value but it has no special authority for the war period. Despite his professed high appreciation of Lincoln's ability, the book is marked by peculiarities which suggest the question whether the President's failure to appoint his old partner to any highly responsible position under the Government embittered his feelings and gave to his biography its seemingly malicious tinge.

Herndon's errors in some other important assertions, direct and by innuendo, were long ago thoroughly exposed, and this fact weakens the force of his positive allegations in other matters wherein his accuracy is disputed.

Lamon's association with the President continued to the end, but it is evident that his characteristics were not such as to lead Mr. Lincoln to make a confidant of him in matters so intimate as religious faith, however much he may have been entrusted with matters official and political; and it is well to know that Lamon's *Life*, professedly the work of a friend, upon whose researches, indeed, and upon material collected by Herndon and himself it was mainly based, was really written by a political opponent of Lincoln utterly lacking in sympathy with him.

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However weakened may have been the faith that had been instilled into the boy Lincoln by his mother, however obscured by the adverse associations of his young manhood and the unsympathetic surroundings of the larger part of his career, it is evident that the germs of truth that had been implanted by the mother who died when her son was but nine years old were never destroyed, and that her dying admonition to her children, "to be good to one another, to love their kindred and worship God" was never wholly forgotten. The impress made upon the little boy had pathetic manifestation when, sorrowing because his mother in the absence of a minister had been buried without religious service, he besought an itinerant preacher whom the mother had known to deliver a sermon over her grave months after her death. The habit of Bible reading begun in Lincoln's childhood continued through his life and that book constituted a large part of the literature accessible to him in his earlier years and it greatly influenced his thought and expression. He continuously showed great familiarity with the sacred history,—it furnished him with frequent reference and quotation, phrases from both Testa-

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ments were freely and appositely used by him, and his literary style is permeated with their spirit and language. Of him it has been said, "Lincoln not only among Americans, but among all English-speaking people of the nineteenth century, is the man who most surely attained the great style, and we all know how naturally in his most solemn moments his style became infused with the phrases and the virtues of the English Bible,"¹ and not alone his style but his life showed how thoroughly he was imbued with its spirit.

For the period anterior to the War, Lincoln's letters and speeches, mainly legal and political, were not of a character to call for such decided evidences of his faith as were demanded in the awful stress of the great conflict, but they were frequently illumined by Biblical reference, and are not wanting in indications of his belief that an overruling Providence would ensure the triumph of right. He had indeed sustained severe personal bereavement, but it was not until the great burden of responsibility and danger was rolled upon him, that he fully realized his need of a power higher than his own, and from the day that he

¹ Gardner "The Bible as English Literature," p. 386.

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left Springfield until his latest public utterance his speeches and his writings give abundant evidence of his belief in God and of faith that He doeth all things well.

Lincoln's first great speech in the East was made at the Cooper Institute in the city of New York on February 27, 1860. It was notable for the display of his familiarity with the writings of the Fathers of the Republic, and because of the favorable impression made upon its hearers it had much to do with ensuring his nomination for the Presidency; the speech closed with these memorable words, typical of his character and revealing the source of his confident courage, "Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us dare to do our duty as we understand it."

Confronted by the grave responsibilities of the Presidency—serious enough under ordinary circumstances to force him who assumes those responsibilities to seek help and guidance from above, but infinitely greater then because of the threatened destruction of the Union—evidences of Mr. Lincoln's appreciation of danger and of his need are many and were shown most touchingly in his farewell to his Springfield neighbors.

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“My Friends: No one not in my situation can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance, I cannot fail. Trusting in Him who can go with me, and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To his care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.”

In other addresses en route to the Capital, he reiterated that what was needed was, “A reliance on the God who has never forsaken this people,” and he expressed hope of deliverance “if I shall be a humble instrument in the hands of the Almighty.” Asserting his courage and his conviction he declared in Philadelphia, “I have said nothing but what

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I am willing to live by, and if it be the pleasure of Almighty God, to die by."

In his Inaugural Address he said, "Intelligence, patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land are still competent to adjust in the best way all our present difficulty."

Through the long war that followed his accession to the Presidency, through defeats and victories, Lincoln's faith remained steadfast, confirmed by success but not destroyed by disaster. Of his many and frequently repeated assertions of unfaltering confidence in God I quote but few.

Proclaiming a national fast day in August, 1861, he declared, "It is fit and becoming in all people, at all times, to acknowledge and revere the supreme government of God; to bow in humble submission to his chastisements; to confess and deplore their sins and transgressions, in the full conviction that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and to pray with all fervency and contrition for the pardon of their past offences, and for a blessing upon their present and prospective action:

"And whereas when our own beloved country, once, by the blessing of God, united,

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prosperous, and happy, is now afflicted with faction and civil war, it is peculiarly fit for us to recognize the hand of God in this terrible visitation, and in sorrowful remembrance of our own faults and crimes as a nation and as individuals, to humble ourselves before him and to pray for his mercy,—to pray that we may be spared further punishment, though most justly deserved; that our arms may be blessed and made effectual for the re-establishment of law, order, and peace throughout the wide extent of our country; and that the inestimable boon of civil and religious liberty, earned under his guidance and blessing by the labors and sufferings of our fathers, may be restored in all its original excellence.”

Eight months later, recommending thanksgiving for victories he wrote, “It has pleased Almighty God to vouchsafe signal victories to the land and naval forces engaged in suppressing an internal rebellion, and at the same time to avert from our country the dangers of foreign intervention and invasion: It is therefore recommended to the people that * * * they especially acknowledge and render thanks to our Heavenly Father for these inestimable blessings; that they then and there implore

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spiritual consolation in behalf of all who have been brought into affliction by the casualties and calamities of sedition and civil war; and that they reverently invoke the Divine guidance for our national counsels, to the end that they may speedily result in the restoration of peace, harmony, and unity throughout our borders, and hasten the establishment of fraternal relations among all the countries of the earth.”

Nearly a year later, concurring with the wishes of the Senate, the President designated a day of national humiliation, fasting and prayer in the following language: “And whereas, it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord:

“And insomuch as we know that by his divine law nations, like individuals, are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this

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world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war which now desolates the land may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people.

“We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown; but we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand that preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us: It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness: * * * All this being done in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the Divine teachings, that the united cry of the nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings no less than the pardon of our

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national sins, and the restoration of our now divided and suffering country to its former happy condition of unity and peace.”

After the great victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, the President wrote: “It has pleased Almighty God to hearken to the supplications and prayers of an afflicted people, and vouchsafe to the army and navy of the United States victories on land and on sea so signal and so effective as to furnish reasonable grounds for augmented confidence that the union of these States will be maintained, their Constitution preserved, and their peace and prosperity permanently restored. But these victories have been accorded not without sacrifices of life, limb, health, and liberty, incurred by brave, loyal and patriotic citizens. Domestic affliction in every part of the country follows in the train of these fearful bereavements. It is meet and right to recognize and confess the presence of the Almighty Father and the power of his hand equally in these triumphs and in these sorrows.

“Now, therefore, be it known that I do set apart Thursday, the 6th day of August next, to be observed as a day for national thanksgiving, praise, and prayer, and I invite the peo-

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ple of the United States to assemble on that occasion in their customary places of worship, and, in the forms approved by their consciences, render the homage due to the Divine Majesty for the wonderful things he has done in the nation's behalf, and invoke the influence of his Holy Spirit to subdue the anger which has produced and so long sustained a needless and cruel rebellion, to change the hearts of the insurgents, to guide the counsels of the government with wisdom adequate to so great a national emergency, and to visit with tender care and consolation throughout the length and breadth of our land all those who, through the vicissitudes of marches, voyages, battles, and sieges have been brought to suffer in mind, body, or estate, and finally to lead the whole nation through the paths of repentance and submission to the Divine Will back to the perfect enjoyment of union and fraternal peace."

These declarations of faith in overruling Providence were not confined to official proclamations, but are to be found in many of his letters and in the reports of the interviews frequently had with people individually or in committees and delegations.

Mrs. Eliza P. Gurney, a native of Philadel-

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phia, the widow of Joseph J. Gurney, of England, was a devout Friend, who was constrained to visit the President in the love of the Gospel and to urge upon him dependence upon God as the only refuge, and to pray for the country and its ruler. To her the President who had listened intently and tearfully said in reply :

“I am glad of this interview, and glad to know that I have your sympathy and prayers. We are indeed going through a great trial—a fiery trial. In the very responsible position in which I happen to be placed, being a humble instrument in the hands of our Heavenly Father, as I am, and as we all are, to work out his great purposes, I have desired that all my works and acts may be according to his will, and that it might be so I have sought his aid ; but if, after endeavoring to do my best in the light which he affords me, I find my efforts fail, I must believe that for some purpose unknown to me he wills it otherwise. If I had had my way, this war would never have been commenced. If I had been allowed my way, this war would have been ended before this ; but we find it still continues, and we must believe that he permits it for some wise purpose

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of his own, mysterious and unknown to us; and though with our limited understandings we may not be able to comprehend it, yet we cannot but believe that he who made the world still governs it."

About a year later Mrs. Gurney, having been informed that the President desired her to write him, sent him an earnest letter testifying her continued sympathy and prayers; and approval of his recent "proclamation of Thanksgiving with its decided recognition of an All-wise and Superintending Providence which in so marked a feature * * * as well as the immediate influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, which perhaps never in any previous State paper has been so fully recognized."

This communication was acknowledged by Mr. Lincoln in the beautiful letter now preserved in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania from a facsimile of which I read:

EXECUTIVE MANSION, September 4, 1864.

My esteemed Friend: I have not forgotten—probably never shall forget—the very impressive occasion when yourself and friends visited me on a Sabbath forenoon two years ago. Nor has your kind letter, written nearly a year ago, ever been forgotten. In all it has

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been your purpose to strengthen my reliance on God. I am much indebted to the good Christian people of the country for their constant prayers and consolations; and to no one of them more than to yourself. The purposes of the Almighty are perfect, and must prevail, though we erring mortals may fail to accurately perceive them in advance. We hoped for a happy termination of this terrible war long before this; but God knows best, and has ruled otherwise. We shall yet acknowledge his wisdom, and our own error therein. Meanwhile we must work earnestly in the best lights he gives us, trusting that so working still conduces to the great ends he ordains. Surely he intends some great good to follow this mighty convulsion, which no mortal could make, and no mortal could stay. Your people, the Friends, have had, and are having, a very great trial. On principle and faith opposed to both war and oppression, they can only practically oppose oppression by war. In this hard dilemma some have chosen one horn, and some the other. For those appealing to me on conscientious grounds, I have done, and shall do, the best I could and can, in my own conscience, under my oath to the law. That you believe

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this I doubt not; and, believing it, I shall still receive for our country and myself your earnest prayers to our Father in heaven.

Your sincere friend,

A. LINCOLN.

To this letter Mrs. Gurney replying thanked him for it and expressed her appreciation of his courteous attention and his kind consideration for the religious scruples of the Society of the Friends, and assured him that they believed he was conscientiously endeavoring, according to his own conviction of right, to fulfill the important trust committed to him. After the President's death, Mrs. Gurney learned that her first letter had been carefully treasured by him and was in his breast pocket when he was killed.

To two Friends in Iowa who had written him a few days prior, he wrote on January 5, 1863: "I have read your letter with pleasure and gratitude. It is most cheering and encouraging for me to know that in the efforts which I have made and am making for the restoration of a righteous peace to our country I am upheld and sustained by the good wishes and prayers of God's people. No one is more

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deeply than myself aware that without His favor our highest wisdom is but as foolishness, and that our most strenuous efforts would avail nothing in the shadow of His displeasure. I am conscious of no desire for my country's welfare that is not in consonance with His will, and of no plan upon which we may not ask His blessing. It seems to me that if there be one subject upon which all good men may unitedly agree, it is imploring the gracious favor of the God of Nations upon the struggles our people are making for the preservation of their precious birthright of civil and religious liberty."

In response to the representatives of the Evangelical Lutherans the President said in part:

"You all may recollect that in taking up the sword thus forced into our hands, this government appealed to the prayers of the pious and the good, and declared that it placed its whole dependence upon the favor of God. I now humbly and reverently, in your presence, reiterate the acknowledgment of the dependence, not doubting that, if it shall please the Divine Being who determines the destinies of nations, this shall remain a united people, and that they will, humbly seeking the Divine guidance,

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make their prolonged national existence a source of new benefits to themselves and their successors, and to all classes and conditions of mankind.”

To members of the Presbyterian General Assembly in reply to resolutions presented by them, he said, in part, “It has been my happiness to receive testimonies of a similar nature from, I believe, all denominations of Christians * * * This is to me most gratifying because from the beginning I saw that the issue of our great struggle depended on the Divine interposition and favor. If we had that all would be well * * * As a pilot I have used my best exertions to keep afloat our ship of state and shall be glad to resign my trust at the appointed time to another pilot more skillful and successful than I may prove. In every case and at all hazards, the government must be perpetuated. Relying as I do upon the Almighty Power, and encouraged as I am by these resolutions which you have just read, with the support which I receive from Christian men, I shall not hesitate to use all the means at my control to secure the termination of this rebellion and will hope for success.” And to a delegation of Methodists, “God bless

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the Methodist Church, bless all the Churches and blessed be God, who in this our great trial giveth us the Churches.”

To a committee from several religious bodies of Chicago, who on September 13, 1862, urged emancipation, Mr. Lincoln responded: “The subject presented in the memorial is one upon which I have thought much. * * * I am approached with the most opposite opinions and advice, and that by religious men who are equally certain that they represent the divine will. I am sure that either the one or the other class is mistaken in that belief, and perhaps in some respects both. I hope it will not be irreverent for me to say that if it is probable that God would reveal his will to others on a point so connected with my duty, it might be supposed he would reveal it directly to me; for, unless I am more deceived in myself than I often am, it is my earnest desire to know the will of Providence in this matter. And if I can learn what it is I will do it.”

Nor was it only in official papers or in intercourse with the people that Lincoln gave evidence of his concern and his faith, but in communion with himself and his God he sought to learn the Divine Will; at least one of these

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meditations has been preserved in his own autograph.

“The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be, and one must be, wrong. God cannot be for and against the same thing at the same time. In the present civil war it is quite possible that God’s purpose is something different from the purpose of either party; and yet the human instrumentalities, working just as they do, are of the best adaption to effect his purpose. I am almost ready to say that this is probably true, that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet. By his mere great power on the minds of the now contestants he could have either saved or destroyed the Union without a human contest. Yet the contest began. And, having begun, he could give the final victory to either side any day. Yet the contest proceeds.”

In testimony of his opinion of the Bible, I cite from his reply to a committee that presented him with a beautiful copy of that book: “In regard to this great Book, I have but to say that it is the best gift God has given to man. All the good Saviour gave the world was communicated through this Book. But for it we

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could not know right from wrong, all things most desirable for man's welfare here and hereafter are to be found portrayed in it."

Joshua F. Speed, perhaps the most intimate of Lincoln's friends in the first years of his Springfield life, narrates the following incident: "In the summer before the President was killed I was invited to spend the night at the Soldiers' Home. As I entered the room near night he was sitting near a window intently reading his Bible, * * * I said, 'I am glad to see you so profitably engaged,' 'Yes,' said he, 'I am profitably engaged.' 'Well,' said I, 'if you have recovered from your scepticism, I am sorry to say that I am not.' Looking me earnestly in the face he said, 'You are wrong, Speed, take all of this Book upon reason that you can, and the balance on faith, and you will live and die a happier and a better man.'" It is gratifying to know that before Mr. Speed's death he had accepted the truth of the Bible and entered into the communion of the Methodist Church.

Of President Lincoln's many friends and associates of the war time none could speak with greater authority than the Reverend Dr. Phineas D. Gurley, pastor of the New York

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Avenue Presbyterian Church of Washington, the church attended by the President and his family. Dr. Gurley was on most intimate terms with Mr. Lincoln, was frequently with him, and had his full confidence. In personal bereavement and in the darkest hours of the national cause, the faithful pastor in prayer and counsel sought to help his dear friend. Dr. Gurley officiated at Willie Lincoln's funeral; he prayed by the bedside of the dying President; and he preached the funeral sermon in the Executive Mansion. From this sermon I cite a few passages as the testimony of a qualified and an honest witness, speaking whereof he knew. "He remembered that God is in history, and he felt that nowhere had his hand and his mercy been so marvellously conspicuous as in the history of this nation. He hoped and he prayed that that same hand would continue to guide us, and that same mercy continue to abound with us in the time of our greatest need. I speak what I know, and testify what I have often heard him say, when I affirm that that guidance and mercy were the props on which he humbly and habitually leaned; that they were the best hope he had for himself, and for his country. * * *

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“His confidence in the overruling providence of God strengthened him in all his hours of anxiety and toil, and inspired him with calm and cheering hope when others were inclining to despondency and gloom. Never shall I forget the emphasis and the deep emotion with which he said, in this very room, to a company of clergymen and others, who called to pay him their respects in the darkest day of our civil conflict: ‘Gentlemen, my hope of success in this great and terrible struggle rests on that immutable foundation, the justice and goodness of God; and, when events are very threatening, and prospects very dark, I still hope that in some way which man cannot see all will be well in the end, because our cause is just, and God is on our side.’ ”

The biographies narrate hundreds of instances illustrating Lincoln’s tenderness of heart, his forgiving disposition and his wide-reaching charity. Perhaps most notable are the records of his generous exercise of the pardoning power to save the lives of men condemned to death. Many pages of the records of the war are filled with dispatches pardoning or respiting soldiers who had been doomed to capital punishment. Commanding officers

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protested against these frequent pardons and respites, claiming that they impaired discipline, but disregarding their objections the President wherever he could find excuse for mitigating or remitting sentence would do so, and even in not a few instances where sympathy for the family of the condemned or his own repugnance to inflict suffering was the sole ground for mercy. Nor was this mercy limited to the unfortunate among his own followers, but was extended to many of those in arms against the government. The forgiveness so frequently expressed in words was often embodied in action. "I am a patient man, always willing to forgive on the Christian terms of repentance and also to give ample time for repentance," and again, "On principle I dislike an oath which requires a man to swear he has not done wrong. It rejects the Christian principle of forgiveness on terms of repentance. I think it is enough if the man does no wrong hereafter."

Asked by an old friend what was to be done with the rebel leaders after the war, the President said he had recently been reading the history of Absalom's rebellion and that he was inclined to adopt the policy of David as expressed in his question and assurance: "Shall

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there any man be put to death this day in Israel? and the King said unto Shimei: Thou shall not die.”

The examples of his gentleness and forgiving spirit are manifold. “I have not been much shocked by the newspaper comments * * * These comments constitute a fair specimen of what has occurred to me through life. I have endured a great deal of ridicule, without much malice, and have received a great deal of kindness not quite free from ridicule. I am used to it.”

Replying to a serenade after his re-election he said, “Now that the election is over, may not all having a common interest reunite in a common effort to save our common country. For my own part, I have striven and shall strive to avoid placing any obstacle in the way. So long as I have been here I have not willingly planted a thorn in any man’s bosom. While I am deeply sensible to the high compliment of a re-election, and duly grateful, as I trust, to Almighty God for having directed my countrymen to a right conclusion, as I think, for their own good, it adds nothing to my satisfaction that any other man may be disappointed or pained by the result. May I ask

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those who have not differed from me to join with me in this same spirit toward those who have?"

I quote his letter to the Reverend Alexander Reed,—later pastor of the Central Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia.

EXECUTIVE MANSION, February 22, 1863.

My dear Sir: Your note, by which you, as general superintendent of the United States Christian Commission, invite me to preside at a meeting to be held this day at the hall of the House of Representatives in this city, is received. While for reasons which I deem sufficient I must decline to preside, I cannot withhold my approval of the meeting and its worthy objects. Whatever shall be sincerely, and in God's name, devised for the good of the soldier and seaman in their hard spheres of duty, can scarcely fail to be blest. And whatever shall tend to turn our thoughts from the unreasoning and uncharitable passions, prejudices, and jealousies incident to a great national trouble such as ours, and to fix them upon the vast and long-enduring consequences, for weal or for woe, which are to result from this struggle, and especially to strengthen

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our reliance on the Supreme Being for the final triumph of the right, cannot but be well for us all. The birthday of Washington and the Christian Sabbath coinciding this year, and suggesting together the highest interests of this life and of that to come, is most propitious for the meeting proposed.

Your obedient servant,

A. LINCOLN.

I close my citation from his words by reading from his Second Inaugural Address the paragraphs that evidence his faith and his charity in language alive with Scriptural expression and spirit.

“Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes his aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God’s assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men’s faces: but let us judge

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not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has his own purposes. 'Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh.' If we shall suppose American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through his appointed time, he now wills to remove, and that he gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

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“With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan; to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”

Abraham Lincoln may have forgotten the admonitions of his “Angel Mother” and failed for years to accept the doctrines of the Book with whose words he was so familiar and in accord with whose teachings so much of his life was lived, but when through gathering storm and in battle flame he saw the call to leadership and duty, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but heeding was transformed, and as we read his immortal words and contemplate his finished work it is not the sceptic of the early day we hear and see, but the divinely-called leader who, “patient in his simple faith sublime,” was inspired to liberate the slave, to save the Republic, and to write the Second Inaugural.

Remembering the faith that never wavered, the hope that never dimmed, the charity that

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never failed, may we not recur to the epistle from which my text was taken and reverently read, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God."

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